

# News Release

Bureau of Land Management, Grand Junction Field Office  
2815 H Road, Grand Junction, CO 81506  
Tel 970-244-3000 • Fax 970-244-3083  
[www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov)

Contact: Mel Lloyd at (970) 244-3097  
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## **BLM issues decision on Bangs Canyon EA**

GRAND JUNCTION, CO—The Bureau of Land Management Grand Junction Field Office has issued the Final Environmental Assessment (CO-130-2004-018-EA) and Decision Record for implementation of the Bangs Canyon Management Plan, which was approved in 1999. After carefully considering approximately 300 unique public comments, the BLM crafted a decision that focuses on sustainable shared-use trails and urban interface management.

“The decision is Alternative 5, which blends aspects from each of the other alternatives in the original EA,” Field Manager Catherine Robertson said. “BLM takes its commitment to the community seriously as it manages for shared-use trails and multiple-use opportunities.”

The decision:

- fulfills the 1999 Bangs Canyon Plan and 1987 Grand Junction Resource Management Plan,
- locates the motorized trailhead away from residential areas,
- includes ATV specific trails,
- expands the backcountry primitive area from 12,000 to 34,000 acres,
- expands the designated shared-use trail system while reducing trail miles from 216 to 187,
- requires well-designed, sustainable routes that are more fun to use and provides protections for the resource,
- improves both facilities and recreation opportunities in the urban interface areas, and
- provides for freeride/downhill bicycle opportunities.

The EA, which was released for public comment in August 2005, analyzed implementation actions for each of the six unique emphasis areas created under the Bangs Canyon Management Plan for the Bangs Canyon Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). Implementation decisions represent the BLM’s final approval for a specific management action. The Bangs Canyon SRMA is located in Mesa County, Colorado, 5 miles south of Grand Junction. The area is bounded by the Gunnison River on the northeast, Colorado National Monument on the northwest, East Creek (Hwy. 141) to the southeast, and Glade Park (Pinyon Mesa) to the southwest.

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The Decision Record and related documents are available at the Grand Junction Field Office or online at <http://www.co.blm.gov/gjra/bangsmgtplan.htm>. Questions, or requests for paper copies of the final Bangs Canyon implementation EA and/or Decision Record, may be addressed to Jim Cooper at (970) 244-3047 or Britta Laub at (970) 244-3031 or by e-mail at [Colorado\\_Bangs\\_Plan@blm.gov](mailto:Colorado_Bangs_Plan@blm.gov).

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**Editor's Note: See attached Sidebar for additional details regarding the decision.**

## Bangs Canyon Implementation Summary

1. The implementation is crafted to fulfill the 1999 Bangs Canyon Management Plan (BCMP) and the 1987 Grand Junction Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP).
2. The decision (Alternative 5) is crafted from the four alternatives discussed in the Environmental Assessment, as well as from public comment.
3. BLM analyzed the construction of a shared-use, single-track system that will have a regional appeal and complements the Cactus Park opportunities, south of Bangs Canyon and across Highway 141 (Area 6).
4. All existing and new routes included in the public routes network will be constructed and maintained to meet sustainable defined standards. (See EA Appendix A, *Criteria for the Placement of Trails*.) Well-designed routes are more fun to use, and resource protection will be enhanced.
5. The actions will improve the recreation opportunities on the urban interface, with better trails and facilities at Lunch Loop. Implementation of the plan expands opportunities for day-use motorized users and mountain bikers in Area 4, and improves hiking trails in Areas 2 and 3. To protect the resource and eliminate troublesome social trails on the urban interface, all visitors are restricted to designated routes (Areas 1, 2, 3 and 4).
6. The decision creates expanded boundaries and additional protections for backcountry primitive experiences. (Acreage was 12,000 and will now be 34,000 acres.)
7. The BLM will be better able to initiate implementation projects using partnerships with user groups.
8. Our obligation to connect the Tabeguache Trail from Little Park Road to Highway 141 will be fulfilled. The primitive 4X4 route will be a more difficult trail suitable for high clearance 4X4 vehicles. This route will provide hunting access, helping to achieve Colorado Division of Wildlife herd management objectives.
9. The decision defines allowable uses for all routes and manages impacts resulting from human use. All trails will be built and maintained to a sustainable standard. The resulting new trail systems reduce the number of miles of routes available for public access, preserving 34,000 primitive backcountry acres. The decision:
  - fulfills the 1999 Bangs Canyon Plan and 1987 Grand Junction Resource Management Plan,
  - locates the motorized trailhead away from residential areas,
  - includes ATV specific trails,
  - expands the backcountry primitive area from 12,000 to 34,000 acres,
  - expands the designated shared-use trail system while reducing trail miles from 216 to 187,
  - requires well-designed, sustainable routes that are more fun to use and provides protections for the resource,

- improves both facilities and recreation opportunities in the urban interface areas, and
- provides for freeride/downhill bicycle opportunities.

10. The following is a summary of the mileages and acreages affected by the full implementation of the 1999 BCMP. Prior to 1999 (approval of the BCMP), 251 miles were available to the public. Presently, 216 miles of routes are available to the public. With the implementation of this decision, 187 miles will be available to the public. Although fewer miles will be available, the recreation experience will be of a higher quality and resource protection will be enhanced.

**ALTERNATIVE 5-SELECTED ALTERNATIVE**

	<b>Area 1</b>	<b>Area 2</b>	<b>Area 3</b>	<b>Area 4</b>	<b>Area 5</b>	<b>Area 6</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>MILEAGE</b>
Closed	9	8	0	10	7	11	45
Admin	0	1	0	1	23	56	81
Existing	15	9	9	13	24	20	90
New	12	6	4	20	6	49	97
Open	27	15	13	33	30	69	187
public routes							